

TABSA Reflection

By Brittney Ellzey Mujica

I must start this reflection by saying that the weeks spent in South Africa with TABSA are some of my favorite weeks of the year. The experience is so fulfilling, exhausting, joyful, heartfelt, and laughter-filled that it's impossible to capture it all in words, but I will try to at least give a glimpse into some of the highlights this year.

Rejoining My TABSA Family



Last year, I was amazed at how quickly these strangers from TABSA felt like family. This year, I was grateful to reunite with many members of last year's team who already felt like family, while meeting new team members who also quickly became part of this close-knit group. The love and compassion shared amongst the team members are truly remarkable. Our shared passion for teaching provided endless topics of conversation. The love I received from the TABSA team fueled my ability to give even more love and compassion to every learner and teacher I encountered. Throughout the entire trip, my heart was full.

Working with All-Girls Learners





This year, we were fortunate to work with a group of Grade 12 female learners in mathematics during Week 1. Initially, many of the girls were reserved and shy about asking and answering questions. However, after a few days of encouragement and positive reinforcement, they blossomed, and we could barely keep up with all the questions. They worked well in groups, with one or two representatives calling me over for questions while all members of the group listened intently to the explanations. The girls were practicing their English and learning mathematics simultaneously. These incredibly intelligent, adaptable, and determined young women inspired me. While I gave a lot of love to the girls, the love I received in return was overwhelming. They not only wanted to learn math but also needed the positive affirmations that they are capable, smart, and worth all the time and attention we could give. I reminded them that the boys aren't smarter, they're just louder, and I asked these girls to go back to their classrooms and BE LOUDER!!!

Reunion with a Friend



One of the Grade 12 learners we worked with last year, Keketso (Keke), visited our TABSA team this year. He is currently studying engineering at a nearby university, and I couldn't be prouder of him! I admire his outlook on life as he finds the positive in every situation. His infectious energy brings positivity and goodness to those around him. I asked him to speak with our learners this year, and listening to his words of wisdom to them blew me away. He is wise beyond his years, and I gain a deeper appreciation for life every time we speak.

Working with Teachers in Bethlehem



As with our learners, building trust with the teachers was essential. I wrote the CAPS standards on the board daily, which was a change from last year, and it helped refresh me on the specifics of CAPS as I planned the day's activities. The teachers enjoyed collaborating in groups and debating the finer points of mathematical problems. We discussed the struggles students face and how different teachers present the material in their classes, with teachers presenting at the front of the room. We also had a chance to do hands-on activities that gave some teachers a better perspective of the topics and provided others with ideas for classroom activities.

We explored transformations, including translation, reflection, rotation, and enlargements and reductions, using tracing paper. This allowed learners to see the transformations happen rather than having to imagine them. We also demonstrated how to do these on the chalkboard using a larger piece of tracing paper. Additionally, we clarified misconceptions on other topics, like congruence and similarity, and discussed strategies to help our learners avoid the same misunderstandings.